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[How Does Your Computer Impact Your Health?](#)

The computer vision syndrome

Your life is made of web chatting, navigation, PC games and the list is endless. Some spend hours and even days without moving from the front of the computer; shower and food are skipped and only physiological needs force them for a few seconds out. But do you think that so much staring at a computer screen does not affect you? Here is just a part of the effect: the "computer vision syndrome" comprising tired dry eyes, blurred vision, eye strain, headache, and sensitivity to light. "A computer is a challenging environment for the visual system primarily because the imagery is not as clear as it seems to be, and because of that it's harder for the eye to focus than it would be on ordinary print," said Dr. Kent Daum, optometrist and vice president of the Illinois College of Optometry in Chicago. A recent survey made by American Optometric Association, on about 1,000 persons older than 18, revealed that 82% used frequently the PC; 42% spent over three hours daily in front of a computer screen; 73% did not take computer breaks as often as recommended; 10% did not take breaks at all. Added to computer vision syndrome, PC users signaled neck and shoulder issues, especially those wearing bifocals. "That's because their bifocals are often not set for their computer so they end up having to move their head closer to the computer while tipping their head back to see the screen. That's an awkward position," said Daum. The computer vision syndrome causes serious ocular issues in over 10 million Americans annually. Protective measures "First, get your eyes checked regularly and work with your doctor of optometry to solve these problems. The doctor who knows you are using a computer for an extended period of time will do things differently for you then they might otherwise do. Special computer glasses and computer screen filters are available to help reduce glare and eye discomfort," said Daum. Don't forget to blink. "Remember to blink when using a computer. When we concentrate, our blink rate goes down, leading to dry eyes. Every 20 minutes look away from your computer for about 20 seconds; this will minimize the development of eye-focusing problems and eye irritation caused by not blinking enough," explained Daum. Work space lighting is a crucial issue. The amount of lighting at the office must be lowered, by replacing a bright light for an overhead light, or use a dimmer switch for controlling the degree of room lighting. "You should not see any glare or reflection at all off your computer screen. You should not have windows in your field of view," said Daum. Ergonomics should not be neglected. "Be careful about the ergonomics of your computer. The screen should be right in front of you so you don't have to twist to see it and the monitor should be right about eye level or a little below eye level," added Daum. It remains one question: what about the unburned calories stored because of so much sitting in front of a computer screen?